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UPRISING TO SMASH RACISM



BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

FULL COVERAGE, REPORTS AND ANALYSIS >>PAGES 2,3,4,5,6 AND 14&15

GEORGE FLOYD—America explodes

TIMELINE

1999

February

Four New York City cops shot and killed 23 year old Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo in the early hours of 4 February 1999. They fired 41 shots, 19 of which hit Amadou. The four cops were later acquitted of second-degree murder.

2009

January

Bay Area Rapid Transit police shot 22 year old Oscar Grant in Oakland on New Year's Day. They held Oscar face down on the floor of a train platform and shot him in the back.

2012

February

A “neighbourhood watch captain” George Zimmerman killed teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida on 26 February. He claimed to have shot Trayvon in self-defence.

Trayvon Martin

2013

July

An all-white jury acquitted George Zimmerman of murder—despite him admitting he gunned down Trayvon Martin. Protests spread across the US in response.

2014

July

Eric Garner died on 17 July after being put in a choke hold by New York City cop Daniel Pantaleo. Footage showed him telling cops 11 times, “I can't breathe.”

2014

August

Huge protests took place in Ferguson, St Louis, following the police killing of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown on 9 August. Protesters approached armed police chanting, “Hands up, don't shoot!”

US cops use racist violence to protect racist, violent system

THE POLICE form a racist, violent institution that works to crush ordinary people and uphold the interests of the powerful.

The world's cameras have documented the movement against police brutality in the US. But that hasn't stopped cops from meting out violence.

And they don't just use fists and feet—they are armed to the teeth.

The human rights group Amnesty International has denounced police use of “heavy-duty riot gear and military-grade weapons”.

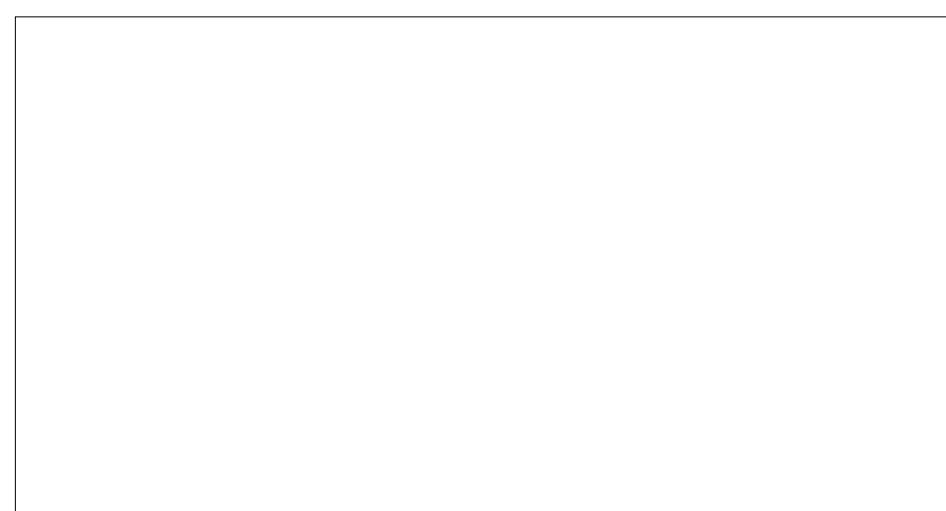
Rachel Ward from Amnesty International USA said cops are being equipped “in a manner more appropriate for a battlefield”.

Horrible scenes have been shared across social media.

Sprayed

One showed a young black man with his arms in the air—a cop pulled down his face mask and pepper sprayed him inches from his face.

Linda Tirado, a journalist and photographer in Minneapolis, was permanently blinded in one eye



THE COPS have shown their true colours by going on the offensive against anti-racist protesters

after cops fired rubber bullets at her.

In the same city, cops fired paint canisters at residents standing on their own front porch.

Officers in Louisville raided a public square, confiscating and destroying water and milk, which is used by protesters to ease the pain of pepper spray.

And in New York and Los Angeles, cop cars mowed down a crowd of protesters.

Some 5,000 members of

the National Guard have been deployed too.

This militarised reserve, with its tanks and helicopters, is being used to intimidate and beat protesters off the streets.

The protests have shown that the cops are not neutral.

The police force is a deeply racist institution because it exists to uphold a deeply racist system.

They're used to crush resistance but also mete out daily terror for black people.

Research last year from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) showed that police killings account for 1.6 percent of all deaths of black men aged 20-24.

That makes young black men over three times more likely to be killed by the cops than white men of the same age.

The authors said that police violence should be treated “as a public health issue”.

Life's hard in Minneapolis

A LONG history of racism, poverty and state violence have fuelled the uprising in Minneapolis.

Minneapolis is portrayed as a liberal and prosperous city.

But beneath that veneer is a glaring class divide and structural racism that has locked working class black people into poverty.

Unemployment in the US has soared during the coronavirus crisis. It was already high for black people.

In the “Twin Cities” area of Minneapolis-Saint Paul, it was 10 percent for blacks compared to 4 percent for whites.

Black people in the State of Minnesota are

Killer cop Derek Chauvin

much more likely to be poor and unemployed compared to other US states. The state ranks 47th out of 50 states for its employment race gap, and 38th for its income race gap.

The city's cops shot Jamar Clark in 2015 and Philando Castile in 2016.

Police had received 18 complaints about officer Derek Chauvin before he crushed George Floyd's neck. He had only been disciplined in two of them.

Racist president Donald Trump has boosted the cops. At a rally in the state last October Trump said, “The respect that we have for law enforcement is unbound.”

Lieutenant Bob Kroll crowed, “The first thing President Trump did when he took office was let cops do their job, put handcuffs on criminals instead of us.”

Rage on the streets all across the globe



called before George Floyd's killing, it became a focus for the rage over his death.

Thousands of people marched on Saturday chanting, “No justice, no peace.”

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

cops attacked a Black Lives Matter protest with tear gas.

Protesters responded by

chanting, “I can't breathe.”

In France 10,000 people

joined an anti-racist march

last Saturday in defiance

of a police ban. Although

Palestine protests link up struggles

PALESTINIANS IN East Jerusalem linked their struggle to the Black Lives Matter movement in the US after Israeli police shot an unarmed man dead.

Dozens of people protested over the killing of Iyad al-Hallak, an autistic Palestinian man.

Israeli cops reportedly shot Iyad ten times, claiming the phone in his hand was a “suspicious object”.

Iyad's parents said he had been on his way to a special needs school where he worked.

Protesters chanted, “Iyad's life mattered, Palestinian lives matter,”

and one placard read, “Justice for Iyad. Justice for George”.

Protest organiser Shahaf Weisbein said, “Police violence in East Jerusalem is policy, just like the policy against black people in the US.”

LEBANESE protesters flooded social media with tweets in solidarity with US protesters.

Their hashtag #Americarevolts referred to the slogan of Lebanon's protest movement—Lebanon revolts—which last year. It became the top trending tag in Lebanon within 24 hours.



Newsdesk
020 7840 5656
Circulation
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Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London
E16 9EJ

Get in touch with Socialist Worker



Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk
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This militant movement shows we can fight back

AN INSPIRATIONAL movement against police violence has taken on our rulers and terrified them.

The murder of George Floyd by cop Derek Chauvin last Monday was the spark.

But the resistance has now engulfed at least 30 US cities and spread across large parts of the globe.

It's drawn in bitter anger about racist police and the injustice of the whole system.

Protesters have taken to the streets across the country, chanting, "Say his name—George Floyd," and, "Black Lives Matter."

Many have carried placards declaring, "I can't breathe."

George was murdered by Chauvin, who knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes despite George pleading for his life.

Witnesses begged that Chauvin release George but he died in hospital soon after.

As a cry of rage against this injustice, tens of thousands of protesters have furiously demonstrated in US cities every night since last Tuesday.

These mobilisations have seen waves of further violence from the police—often armed with tear gas and rubber bullets.

At least 39 cities across 16 states and the entire state of Arizona have imposed curfews, restricting movement beginning as early as 6pm Sunday evening.

Curfew

Public transportation has been suspended in major cities, such as Chicago and New York, during curfew hours.

But ordinary people have defied efforts to scare them off the streets.

Cop cars have mown down protesters, fired rubber bullets directly into people's faces and sprayed mace and tear gas at point-blank range.



PROTESTERS TURNED their fire on racist president Trump

But protesters remain unbowed—for night after night they have marched on the White House to lay the blame at the doorstep of racist president Donald Trump.

In extraordinary scenes of resistance, they fought back against secret service agents and lit fires on Trump's front lawn.

And in Birmingham, Alabama, a Confederate statue was torn to the ground while protesters chanted, "Take this shit down."

In La Mesa, a suburb of San Diego,

activists burnt two banks to the ground and police fired tear gas to try and break apart crowds.

Masses of people have continued to protest despite police repression and politicians' appeal for the demonstrations to end.

There are signs that the protests are starting to have an impact.

It's likely that pressure from the protests pushed the authorities to charge Chauvin with third-degree murder.

And now activists are calling for

the other three cops involved in his death to face similar charges and for Chauvin to face first-degree murder charges.

The scale and the urgent mood of the protests show how deeply this bitterness is felt across society.

The resistance on the streets of the US is a powerful indicator of the mood that exists among working class people about the vicious system that we live in.

And it's a display of the courage people can show in fighting it.

'Peaceful protest failed'

MINNEAPOLIS, THE city where George was murdered, has seen some of the largest protests demanding justice.

In a desperate bid to regain control, the state government imposed an 8pm curfew.

"I honestly thought the 8pm curfew would curtail things but it was almost more intense," one protester told Socialist Worker.

And Minneapolis resident Todd

told Socialist Worker, "It's been a volatile situation and people are scared. Look at all the peaceful protests that have gone on over the years and how little they've done for black and brown people across the country."

"This is one of hundreds of situations of brutality in police custody. And for many people, it's exposed the divide between the law concerning normal people and the police."



George Floyd

TIMELINE

2014 November

Thousands protested across the US over the decision not to charge cop Darren Wilson, who killed Michael Brown.



2014 December

Protests erupted after a grand jury ruled that New York cop Daniel Pantaleo should not be indicted over the death of Eric Garner.

2014 December

Cops shoot Jerame Reid dead in New Jersey on 30 December after stopping the car he was travelling in. Cop Brahem Days told Jerame to get out of the car and, "If you reach for something, you're going to be fucking dead."

2016 July

Thousands of protesters took to the streets after cops killed Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. Protests took place in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Minneapolis, Minnesota.

2016 August

Protests erupted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, after cops shot and killed 23 year old Sylville Smith. He was the 721st person to be killed by cops in the US so far that year.

2020 March

Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old emergency medical technician was shot eight times when officers entered her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky, on 13 March. They were executing a search warrant as part of a drugs investigation, but no drugs were found in the property.

2020 May

George Floyd, a black man, was murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin on 25 May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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- Send 'start' to the number

'It feels like a revolution is coming'

US protester Tanner Herndon, who blocked a freeway in Houston, spoke to Socialist Worker

"THIS IS THE FIRST PROTEST I'VE EVER ACTUALLY BEEN TO. I RECENTLY MOVED TO HOUSTON FROM LAS VEGAS, RIGHT BEFORE STAY AT HOME ORDERS WERE ENACTED.

The mood started off great, the Black Lives Matter organisers were handing out masks, gloves, and water. It was clear that this was intended to be a peaceful protest.

The energy is almost impossible to describe.

It was the anger of people who are tired of being treated unfairly, people who are tired of fearing for their life everyday. However, there was a beautiful feeling of unity.

Thousands of people of all ages, races, and economic backgrounds unified to fight for the rights of their black brothers and sisters.

Different

I think the recent protests have been much larger than those in the past. This feels different. It feels like a revolution is coming.

I don't know exactly why they are larger.

It's impossible to ignore the murder of George Floyd. More people are aware, more people are making their voices heard, and more people have the time to take action.

The police tried to block our routes at every turn. I saw a woman get violently thrown to the ground when she tried to get past them, and another woman get trampled by a fist in solidarity.

We split into two different groups and our numbers were greater than theirs. We made it to the freeway overpass and ran down the sides



A BLACK Lives Matter protest in Houston, Texas

Riots are an act of rage and against an unequal and oppressive society

THOSE IN power denounce riots and looting, and the media is quick to seek out and blame a fringe minority of "extremists".

But the scale of the movement in the US shows that the riots are a reflection of the deep anger that is felt by tens of millions of people.

It's not mindless violence.

Protesters in Minneapolis didn't start by looting supermarkets—their first major target was as a police station.

Actions by ordinary people can make a difference.

They can cause the president to crawl into his underground bunker in Washington as Donald Trump did last Friday night.

Outside the White House protesters raged against racism and the police barricades.

Action by ordinary people can push back state assaults and bring governments to their knees.

We saw this with the Yellow Vests revolt in France or the movement and riot against Margaret Thatcher's poll tax in 1990s Britain.

Many of those ransacking shops are among the poorest people in the US. And their



Poor people grab what they can in riots

already miserable conditions have been made far worse by the recent collapse in the economy. Some are stealing food and other basic necessities—including nappies—while others grab the most expensive items to hand in the hope of selling them. By their actions, they insist that human beings have the right to take what they need to survive. The businesses they steal from have made their profits on the backs of the working class and

poor. And capitalist society makes it clear that our value as human beings can only be measured by what we own. Riots are an articulation of deep anger at a society that oppresses and exploits the vast majority of ordinary people. And against a system where racist police constantly put black lives in danger.

There are many ways in which people resist oppression—and riots are one. But they do have weaknesses.

Sometimes they hit the wrong targets, such as other oppressed groups. There have been some examples of small shops owned by African-Americans and Asian Americans being attacked.

And, riots often explode in poor neighbourhoods, rather than going uptown to smash up the playgrounds of the rich.

They do not have the sense of collective democracy and discipline that comes from the best examples of organised workers (see right).

The task is to move from riot to revolution that can really challenge the capitalist system.



'No justice, no peace'

Bus drivers refuse to help the cops move arrestees

MANY WORKERS and trade unionists stand in solidarity with the justice for George Floyd protesters.

In several cities, bus workers have refused to help cops transport arrested protesters.

In New York one bus driver got off his bus to huge cheers from activists last weekend as he refused to drive to the police station.

The Transport Workers Union called on bus drivers to "refuse to transport arrested protesters."

In Minneapolis, the Amalgamated Transit Union's 1005 branch says that multiple bus drivers have refused to work with the police. It said, "Minneapolis bus drivers—our members—have the right to refuse the dangerous duty of transporting police to protests and arrested demonstrators

away from these communities where many of these drivers live."

One Minneapolis bus driver and ATU 1005 member, Adam Burch, said, "As a transit worker and union member I refuse to transport my class and radical youth to jail.

"An injury to one is an injury to all. The police murdered George Floyd and the protest against it is completely justified and should continue until their demands are met."

Trade unionists joined with protesters occupying the roads, and said, "We stand with Black Lives Matter. No justice. No peace."

And the movement that's erupted over George Floyd's murder breaks the idea that there is a common shared interest between ordinary people and those in power.

That's a myth that's peddled from the top of society, especially in times of crisis.

The movement in the US shows the sort of resistance that will be needed to shape the response to Covid-19.

There are plenty of warm words, from everyone from trade union leaders to Extinction Rebellion, that there should be "no going back" to how life was before the pandemic hit.

That's right. The present system



People cheer a bus driver in New York

Unrest exposes Democrats

THE ERUPTION OF STRUGGLE ON THE STREETS HAS EXPOSED LEADING DEMOCRAT PARTY POLITICIANS WHO HAVE VACILLATED OVER SUPPORT FOR THE PROTESTS.

Democrat presidential candidate Joe Biden visited the site of Black Lives Matter protest in Wilmington, Delaware, on Sunday.

But rather than an outright show of support for the protests, he instead visited boarded up shops. "We must not allow this pain

to destroy us," he tweeted.

Supposedly left wing politicians—including Congress representative Ilhan Omar—also wavered. Omar appeared to

support some of the protesters.

But she also accused people involved in fighting the police as "not interested in protecting black lives."

"In Minneapolis, we have marched, we have protested, we have organised.

"And when we see people setting our buildings and our businesses ablaze, we know those are not people who are interested in protecting black lives," she said.

The Tories claim their plans



Joe Biden

Protests and social distance

THE PROTESTS DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR GEORGE FLOYD ARE MAGNIFICENT.

Thousands turned out in central London at very short notice.

Tens of thousands have protested across the US and the world.

Some opponents of the protests have attacked them for a lack of social distancing as the

coronavirus pandemic rages. But there are also understandable fears among people sympathetic to the protests too.

Governments have left people vulnerable, and black people have disproportionately died.

Socialist Worker is fully in support of the protests. Ideally protesters should

Bus drivers refuse to help the cops move arrestees

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

US REVOLT AGAINST A RACIST SYSTEM MUST SPREAD

THE UNITED STATES has erupted into historic scenes of resistance in the last week.

It has transformed the political landscape as huge protests—often led by young, black people—have risen up against the violence and hatred suffered at the hands of the racist police force.

We're going to have to force them. The types of organised fightback in the US and Hong Kong show the types of resistance that will be needed.

The movement that's erupted over George Floyd's murder breaks the idea that there is a common shared interest between ordinary people and those in power.

That's a myth that's peddled from the top of society, especially in times of crisis.

And the movement in the US shows the sort of resistance that will be needed to shape the response to Covid-19.

There are plenty of warm words, from everyone from trade union leaders to Extinction Rebellion, that there should be "no going back" to how life was before the pandemic hit.

That's right. The present system

is toxic in ways that threaten our lives and the future of the planet.

But change isn't going to be automatic.

There won't be some sort of grand reckoning from our rulers, where they simply decide to leave behind racism, stop their attacks on working class people and tackle climate catastrophe.

We're going to have to force them. The types of organised fightback in the US and Hong Kong show the types of resistance that will be needed.

There is a sharp choice here—the options are to stew in the failures of reformism, or to follow the example of the US resistance.

We don't have a fight here in Britain

It shows it is possible to resist at a time that is dominated by the pandemic

against our government and the vicious system they reign over.

The Tories are implementing a disastrous coronavirus strategy that puts profits before people's lives. Their way out of economic ruin is to make ordinary people pay through sweeping austerity programmes.

But the US shows it is possible to fight back.

We don't have to meekly accept that we should pay for their crisis. Fighting back can include angry protests, as well as strikes and wider action by workers.

Revolutionary socialists don't see the end goal as making the capitalist system slightly better. We want systematic change—not least because as Malcolm X said "You can't have capitalism without racism".

It's possible to live in a world without racist cops, and a society without a police force at all.

And it's also possible to build a world where ordinary people have a say and where oppression is not a feature.

That's why the answer lies in a radically different socialist society—and the path to that lies in resistance and revolution.

MILLIONS OF parents faced an agonising choice this week of whether to send their children back to school.

The Tories wanted primary school children in reception, year 1 and year 6 to start returning from Monday of this week.

Many parents, workers, union leaders and scientists agree that this risks a second spike in coronavirus. But many also worry about how lockdown is impacting children.

We should not accept that we must have either an unsafe return

to school and work, or more hardship.

If the Tories really cared they could give parents payments to cover the extra costs of having children at home. They could give every child in Britain a laptop, tablet or computer.

They could impose freezes on energy bills and rents.

But they don't care about working class children—they care about getting their system back up and running. It's right to resist them.

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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS

Trump banks on racial polarisation

THE PROTESTS against the killing of George Floyd by the Minneapolis police are swelling into an uprising of national proportions. Of course, this isn't the first. There were the great inner-city risings of the 1960s, the Los Angeles revolt of 1992, and the Black Lives Matter protests that began in 2014.

The African-American Marxist August Nimtz quotes Tony Bouza, a former Minneapolis police chief, who admitted that the "heart of the problem of both crime and police abuse in America is our tacitly accepted class structure separating the privileged from the poor, and along with it the systemic racism that society as a whole is not yet willing to face."

But, of course, this latest revolt takes place in a new context, the Covid-19 pandemic, which has now taken over 100,000 lives in the United States. This is amplifying the tensions in two ways. First, as ABC News starkly put it, "the Covid-19 global pandemic became a black, brown and working-class epidemic in America" and summarises the horrifying statistics.

"In Washington DC Latinos have been seven times more likely to be infected with coronavirus than white residents. In Georgia, 80 percent of Covid-19 hospitalisations are African-Americans. In New York City, African-Americans are twice as likely to die of the virus than white residents. In New York State, of the 21 zip codes with the most new Covid-19 hospitalisations, 20 have greater-than-average black and/or Latino populations."

A New York Times columnist put it even more starkly. "This crisis is exposing the class savagery of American democracy and the economic carnage that it has always countenanced."

The fear and suffering the pandemic has caused among the working poor have intensified long-standing tensions.

Time magazine reports, "The Powderhorn Park neighbourhood, where Floyd was confronted by police, is among Minneapolis' hardest hit communities according to the city's data." A local labour rights activist says, "Policing and racism are public health problems."

Floyd's killing lit a tinder box.

Secondly, there is Donald Trump, who has been busily pouring oil on troubled waters. On Friday of last week he tweeted, quoting racist Miami police chief Walter Headley in 1967, "When the looting starts, the shooting starts."

He gloated that protesters outside the White House, if they had broken through, would "have been greeted with the most vicious dogs, and most ominous weapons, I have ever seen. That's when people would have been really badly hurt, at least."

Trump is also trying to pin the blame for the protests on the far left. He tweeted on Sunday, "The United States of America will be designating ANTIFA as a Terrorist Organisation"—a ridiculous threat since "Antifa" are loose networks of militant anti-fascists.

Inflammatory

It's too easy to explain away this inflammatory language by saying Trump is an irrational racist jerk. He is a racist jerk, but he's cunning. The pandemic has shredded Trump's plans to win November's presidential election on the basis of a relatively robust economy.

Hence his eagerness to end the lockdown, even at the price of many more deaths. But, though the stock market has revived, the general economic picture is grim. Jay Powell, chair of the Federal Reserve Board, the US central bank, has warned that even once a recovery begins, the US may face an "extended period of low productivity growth and stagnant incomes".

Moreover, according to Financial Times columnist Edward Luce, Trump's callous bungling of the pandemic is encouraging many over-65s to switch their support to Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate. Biden is currently ten points ahead in the polls.

Faced with this, Trump is going for his version of the old Republican "Southern strategy" first successfully used in 1968 by Richard Nixon. He reacted to the rise of the Black Power movement and the rising provoked by the assassination of Martin Luther King by playing on white racist fears to win the presidency.

Trump's rhetoric is giving racist cops and National Guardsmen the green light to run amok. He clearly hopes that stoking racial polarisation will keep him in the White House.



PROTESTERS IN masks march in London to protest at the racist murder of George Floyd

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

'Not just an American issue' say protesters in London

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

THE MOVEMENT against police brutality has burst onto the streets of Britain.

Big, angry demonstrations demanded justice for George Floyd, a black man killed by cops in the US last week.

The protests in Britain followed the fifth night of widespread unrest in the US. And more were planned for this week.

At least 5,000 people marched through central London on Sunday. Protester Calvin told Socialist Worker it was "urgent" to come out on the streets.

"We can't wait to start in 24 hours and we can't start when the lockdown is over—we need to fight now," he said.

The furious protest, organised at a day's notice, assembled in Trafalgar Square.

It then made its way through central London before arriving at the US embassy in south London.

Chants of, "Say his name—George Floyd," and, "Black Lives Matter," rang out as protesters occupied roads and stopped traffic.

Protester ZamZam said, "If we stay silent, people will think we aren't bothered. We need to carry on no matter what."

Bridget from the US added, "We need a united front against racism—enough is enough. We need global change."

Many held handwritten placards and wore face masks. Homemade signs read, "It's not police brutality, it's murder," and, "I am too young to be this angry."

A deep anger at the rotten nature of racism within society ran through the crowd.

Calvin said, "The violence against black people by the police doesn't stop.

"That's why people are rioting in the US—because they

have tried everything else." Protester Jade added, "This isn't a black and white issue. The issue is the police don't look after us. They serve the state and private property."

Some protesters also chanted the names of Mark Duggan and Rashan Charles, just two of the black men who have been killed by cops in Britain.

Jessica told Socialist Worker, "This is not just an American issue. Black lives are under threat."

Hundreds also marched to St Ann's Square in Manchester on the same

day chanting, "Black Lives Matter." Hundreds more gathered at Cardiff Castle in south Wales.

Protester Donna said, "If you're silent, you're not going to change anything. It's heart breaking that people can't see past the colour of skin."

And on Saturday, big numbers of people marched through Peckham in south London demanding justice.

More protests were planned throughout this week, including a Stand Up To Racism day of action on Wednesday.

Everyone should back them.

Outrage at south London incident

ANTI-RACISTS IN south east London were set to protest on Wednesday of this week after footage showed a woman shouting, "I can't breathe" as she was restrained by police in Lewisham.

The footage shows six police officers pinning the woman to the ground. Bystanders shout "that's not right" after one officer hits the woman several times.

One says, "What

happened to lockdown? The rule applies to us but not to them, is that how it is?"

Police threatened to arrest bystanders filming the incident for breaching the lockdown.

Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu, who posted the clip on Twitter, said, "Why would it take six police officers to pin down one woman in Lewisham?"

Harold Wilson, an anti-racist activist in

Lewisham told Socialist Worker "It's easy to become overwhelmed by all this."

"That's why you need to protest to give yourself a sense of liberation and a sense of hope."

Activists from Stand Up To Racism planned to hold a protest outside Lewisham police station on Wednesday.

Nick Clark

Protest on Wed 3 June, 6pm, Lewisham police station, 43 Lewisham High st, SE13 5JZ

Lockdown relaxation puts profit before lives

The Tories have sent the signal that lockdown is over—risking a second wave, says Tomáš Tengely-Evans

THE TORIES want to dump the lockdown—and blame ordinary people for undermining it if there's a devastating second wave of the virus.

Tory housing secretary Robert Jenrick made clear last weekend that ministers are not “led by the science”. They are led by big business and Boris Johnson’s ruthless desire to keep the top job and protect his senior advisor Dominic Cummings, who breached lockdown rules.

There was a further loosening of lockdown measures from Monday of this week—a move that could cause a second wave of coronavirus infections.

Jenrick announced that vulnerable people would be able to go outside, claiming, “Now that we’ve passed the peak the risk to those shielding is lower.”

The new guidelines applied from the following day, Monday, and had not been published as Jenrick made the announcement.

More than 2.5 million vulnerable people were told to “shield” from coronavirus by remaining indoors. This included those with underlying health conditions, people who’d had a recent operation or pregnant women.

The Tories say that vulnerable people in England will be able to go out and meet someone from another household if they live alone.

Blue

Phil Anderson of the MS Society said the changes had come “out of the blue”. He said that vulnerable people would want to know “a lot more about the scientific evidence showing this will be safe for them”.

The new lockdown rules include allowing groups of six people to meet outdoors or in gardens.

Car showrooms and outdoor markets reopened this week. And Johnson suggested last week that pubs with gardens could reopen ahead of schedule towards the end of the month.

Ministers say people must keep to social distancing under the rules.

BACK STORY

Boris Johnson is desperate to get back to business as usual

- He delayed starting the lockdown when the pandemic hit
- And he’s wanted to end the lockdown ever since it was first imposed
- The Tories fear the lockdown will hurt British-based bosses competing with other countries
- So they want to open up businesses and push people back to work—regardless of the threat to people’s lives

But the Association of Directors of Public Health said the changes were “not supported by the science”. It warned that the “public is not keeping to social distancing as it was”.

The effective end to the lockdown is no accident.

Johnson is desperate to deflect ordinary people’s rage away from Cummings.

The Tories had been riding high in the polls despite their catastrophic handling of the coronavirus crisis.

Scandal

The scandal was the first significant blow to their popularity. The Tories dropped by 4 points in the polls to 43 percent, giving them their lowest lead over Labour since August.

Meanwhile, 65 percent of people thought Johnson was wrong to stand by Cummings—including 48 percent of Tory voters.

But the Cummings scandal added to the signal from politicians and the press that the lockdown is over.

They gave bosses the green light to push people back into work. And if people are being forced back into unsafe workplaces where they spend the majority of their time, many will see little point of maintaining lockdown when at home.

If there’s a deadly second wave, it’s the Tories who will have more blood on their hands.



DOMINIC CUMMINGS—helping to end the lockdown before it's safe

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

Still no justice for Windrush scandal victims as compensation goes unpaid

ONLY 60 people who applied for the Windrush Compensation Scheme have received any money, according to official figures.

The Home Office said it has paid £362,996 to 60 people—that’s fewer than 5 percent of those who have made claims.

Official data shows that 1,275 applications had been made by the end of March.

The compensation fund has an estimated budget of at least £200 million.

The Home Office added that it has also made offers of approximately £280,000 which have yet to be accepted.

Some people risk dying before they get any compensation.

The fund was set up in the wake of the Windrush scandal.

This saw tens of thousands of migrants from Britain’s former colonies—and their descendants—face the threat of deportation or the loss of livelihoods.

It was the result of changes pushed through by then Tory home secretary Theresa May as part of the Immigration Act 2014.

May’s “hostile environment”



A protest demanding justice

the Tory government and Home Office.

It found that its treatment of Windrush migrants was “consistent with some elements” of institutional racism.

The compensation is vital for many people who fell into debt after being denied the right to work or claim benefits under the hostile environment.

Judy Griffiths came from Barbados and was caught in the Windrush scandal after losing her job. She previously described how, “Basically, I was told that I was an illegal immigrant, which was horror, shock, horror, shock, more horror, you know.”

She said, “I understand that they have to verify everything but I am still in arrears, still trying to keep my head above water, still getting calls from the council about the arrears.

“We’re still suffering and they don’t seem to understand how badly it has affected our lives.”

The scandal is another reminder of the racism at the heart of the Tories’ immigration policies and Britain’s immigration system.

Don't be divided by car bosses

AUTO BOSSES are setting workers against each other as they seek to restart profit-making.

They are pushing for job cuts and closures—and hoping they can divide a fightback.

In some places there is real resistance.

After Nissan announced the closure of its Spanish plant in Barcelona, workers angrily protested and burnt tyres outside the factory gates.

They had already started an indefinite strike in early May after initial plans outlined a 20 percent cut to the workforce.

Meanwhile the militant occupation of a Renault plant in northern France has won an important victory.

Occupied

Workers at the Foundry of Brittany plant struck and occupied last week as soon as the workers' union said it had heard "the guillotine was going to fall".

After five days of occupation Renault bosses said the plant would not close—for now.

"It's a reprieve," said Mael Le Goff, CGT union representative at the factory. "But the hardest part is still to come."

Management wants to close other factories and to push

Protest in Barcelona

through other changes that will mean thousands of job cuts.

Around 6,000 workers and their supporters rallied at the Renault plant in Maubeuge on the Franco-Belgium border against closures last Saturday.

In Britain the Nissan plant at Sunderland has been reprieved for the moment.

The Unite union's Steve Bush, national officer for automotive, said, "We send our solidarity to our colleagues in Barcelona."

But he also said that closure was "a regrettable reminder that automotive manufacturing is facing tremendous challenges".

And Bush lauded "Europe's most efficient plant, Sunderland."

Across the world unions have agreed concessions to boost "productivity" and "competitiveness". The result has always been disunity in the face of brutal employers.

Hong Kong's protesters must reject false friends

by LAM CHI LEUNG

THE NATIONAL People's Congress in Beijing, China, has passed its "Resolution on Establishing a National Security Law in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)".

This has aroused a new round of public discontent and sustained protests in Hong Kong.

On 24 May police arrested at least 193 people, some as young as 12 years old.

Almost half of the 396 people taken into custody on 27 and 28 May were students.

Some skipped classes or staged sit-ins.

The police have been more heavy-handed than they were last year in dealing with demonstrators.

With the coronavirus epidemic continuing and the government's ban on people gathering for meals, the number of people protesting this week was not large.

Rallies

Still, by the time the pandemic subsides, it will probably be around the time of the formal passage of the new law—and Hong Kong will definitely see mass rallies.

The Beijing regime is not confident that Hong Kong can push through the National Security Law on its own in the near future. And it is afraid that mass protests may provide an example for people elsewhere in southern China to follow.

It has therefore decided to bypass the Hong Kong SAR government and legislate directly from the centre.

The recent continuous week of demonstrations shows the bravery of the people, youth and students.

But some of the demonstrators also had limitations. Some

protesters have not been particularly friendly to recent migrants from the mainland to Hong Kong.

Some have even yelled at them to go back to the mainland.

The far right nativists are turning to the US government for help or allowing other western powers to intervene. By doing this they could easily turn Hong Kong into a pawn in a geopolitical tug-of-war.

This is a worrying xenophobic, pro-American trend, which seems to be gradually gaining ground within the opposition movement, particularly among sections of the militant youth.

The struggle against the National Security Law is an integral part of the opposition to the Chinese bureaucratic capitalist regime.

Our allies should be the people of every country, especially the people of mainland China.

Thus the working masses of Hong Kong need to organise themselves, and unite with all forms of struggle and campaigns in defence of people's rights in mainland China.

Only in this way can political freedoms eventually be won throughout China, and Hong Kong's democracy autonomy be secured.

Lam Chi Leung is a revolutionary socialist based in Hong Kong and editor of the Marxists Internet Archive Chinese

On other pages...

Plan for new laws reignites Hong Kong resistance >>Page 17

SLOVENIA

Thousands on streets against far right power grab

A MASS movement in Slovenia, in central Europe, is challenging a power grab by the country's far right prime minister.

Around 10,000 people took to the streets of capital Ljubljana on Friday. It marked the sixth week of mass protests in towns and cities across the country against prime minister Janez Jansa.

Jansa is trying to use the coronavirus crisis to increase state powers for the police and military, and is targeting migrant rights and environmental groups.

He is an ally of Hungary's far right prime minister,

Viktor Orban, who gave himself dictatorial powers in March.

Tea Jarc, president of the Mladi Plus union, has been on the protests since the beginning. "Every week there is a new scandal in how the government acts and operates," she told Socialist Worker.

Tea says that "now everybody knows what they're doing on a Friday evening".

"When the last government collapsed we thought we'd face a new election, but other parties were able to form a coalition with an extreme right party," she said. "The first protest was in February calling for people

to have the power to decide, then coronavirus hit and the government started imposing measures."

"So we started having weekly protests on Fridays."

Jansa claims the new powers are to protect people's health.

But he is still pushing ahead despite declaring an official end to the epidemic and many lockdown measures.

While reopening schools and workplaces, protests and gatherings remain banned.

Protests use mass cycle rides to get around a state ban on protests and the threat of arrest to organisers. Tea said, "We're

calling on people to say, 'I'm the organiser,' and then we have 10,000 people saying it."

The left and unions, climate change and LGBT+ groups are at the centre of the protests.

And Tea says they have drawn in many people "who are in between" and just believe "what the government is doing has crossed the line".

The protests have forced the government to back off some proposals.

People are determined to continue—with many demanding the fall of the Jansa government.

Tomáš Tengely-Evans

SNP vision is not enough

THE Scottish government's withdrawal from the four nations action plan has become a defining moment for SNP theatrics.

It signalled a rejection of the Westminster Tories' sickening approach to the coronavirus crisis.

But hidden behind the colossal British death toll, the Scottish government follows the same deadly neoliberal instincts.

The progressive image of the SNP is strengthened by Boris Johnson's further move to the right, though it is hardly a departure from the nationalists' big business agenda.

For example, deregulation hasn't ever been reversed, leaving the working class vulnerable to the rough hands of the free market.

And the SNP hasn't renationalised key industries which shows its disregard for essential public services such as social care.

The SNP often presents a grand vision of independence. But its vision is not enough.

If we remain with this government and this system it will continue to put profit before people.

This crisis has shown that we can't return to normal.

When the campaign for Scottish independence begins again, the movement must rethink its vision of independent Scotland.

We can't continue to look to the business-centred SNP.

A left vision must be fought for and won, or we will continue to see working class lives put at risk.

Brian Claffey
Glasgow

This Socialist Worker cartoon was offensive

A CARTOON in Socialist Worker (20 May) by Tim displays a poster with the phrase "You don't (have) to be Mad to Work Here But It Helps".

Where to begin?

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) rightly identifies offensive language that reinforces mental health oppression as unacceptable.

Perhaps, Tim can explain how SWP members are to be given the confidence to challenge a highly offensive poster that is common in

South Korea's second wave is a real warning for Britain

SOUTH KOREA is witnessing what seems to be the beginning of a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At the beginning of May, the Korean government announced that there were no new confirmed cases of the virus.

It seemed like a victory in containing the virus, and South Korea was portrayed in the global media as a success.

The Korean government sent messages to the public about easing physical distancing and closure measures and the reopening of the schools.

Easing of lockdown measures is turning out to be devastating. Busy nightclubs have become a hotbed for infection and the virus spread

from a single person to 266 people as of last Friday.

The government blamed individuals for visiting the club when it actually was the authorities who said they could reopen.

And a confirmed case was reported from a warehouse of 2,300 workers, leaving more than a hundred infected.

Bosses want to keep making profit, and social distancing can get in the way of that so workplaces are still often unsafe.

Workers are risking their lives to make ends meet.

Schools reopened on 26 May, which has turned out to be disastrous. A total of 838 schools were forced to close down after just two days of being open due to

confirmed cases of Covid-19 among students and teachers.

The government was slow to retreat from the decision on reopening of schools.

This clearly shows that the production of the labour force is more valuable to the ruling class than the lives of children.

The case of South Korea shows how reopening schools and returning to workplaces could be a dangerous step in Britain.

The capitalist system is driven by profit and is willing to risk the lives of ordinary people.

Socialists and workers must fight against an unsafe return to work and argue for radical change.

Irang Bak
Central London

Just a thought...

Wales is not much better

SO FAR, the Labour administration in Wales has escaped much criticism for its handling of coronavirus.

Until recently plans for an easing of the lockdown avoided deadlines or specifics.

But overall the Welsh Assembly is clearly nervously looking to follow Tory England's lead.

Despite occasional differences, Wales has suffered from the same lack of planning as the rest of Britain.

Pressure from workers and the public must be put on the assembly to prevent any rushed return to work—and not being Boris Johnson isn't enough.

Neil Harrison
Cardiff

Cops are above the law

I GOT stopped recently by the police while putting up "No Unsafe Return To School" posters.

"What do you think you're going to achieve by that? You want anarchism?" one asked.

"Total liberation of working peoples everywhere, officer" didn't seem like the right answer.

"Helping save just one life would do for me," I answered.

They didn't seem too keen on the idea of this, or on social distancing either.

Josh Largent
East London

No trust for killer police

I WATCHED a report that said calls to domestic violence support lines have risen tenfold.

The report also asked why there's been no increase in reports to the police.

Considering what's happening in the US and here it's no surprise.

Naima Omar
East London

Piers better than Keir?

DID YOU think the day would come when Piers Morgan would be more effective against the Tories than the leader of the opposition? No, me neither!

Rick Owen
Via Facebook

Can this be the end of fast fashion?

WITHOUT AN online presence, Covid-19 has hit Primark hard. The business stopped production in March, leading monthly sales to crash from £650 million to nothing.

But it's Primark's workers that have been hit hardest.

In Bangladesh over a million garment workers working for Primark and other brands had, by April, been sent home or laid off due to cancelled orders.

Now Primark has hinted it will reopen in June. Primak is a retail

store that mainly sells fast fashion, which is hugely damaging for the climate, and for the workers who produce it.

The Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh in 2013 was a sobering. A garment factory supplying Primark and others collapsed killing 1,130 people.

Some say Primark's exploitative behaviour is down to consumers buying too many cheap clothes.

But it's not working class people in the West who are to blame, it's the bosses who create unsafe and insecure conditions.

As demands for a "new normal" grow, we need to push these arguments forward. It is only through international solidarity that real change can be won.

Martha Snow
York

RACIST RULES LEAVE MILLION MIGRANTS IN SQUALOR

A million people in Britain are banned from claiming any benefits—and the coronavirus crisis will throw hundreds of thousands more into the same situation. Tomáš Tengely-Evans lifts the lid on a horrific, hidden world

“WHY AREN’T they eligible for Universal Credit?” That’s how Boris Johnson last week tried to brush aside the plight of migrants like Adaoma, who was forced into destitution under racist Tory rules.

Adaoma is one of the million migrants who are denied any benefits under an immigration measure known as No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).

The measure (see box) makes the lives of vulnerable people even more desperate. Yet politicians such as Johnson claim to be ignorant of the fact.

“So many are suffering and they don’t have a clue,” Adaoma told Socialist Worker.

Adaoma and her four young children have been denied any state support since 2008, when she became single after suffering domestic violence. In the twelve years since they have survived solely off food banks and help from the church and friends.

She had to wage a long battle with the authorities against NRPF, which was only lifted in the summer of 2019 after she appealed.

Adaoma says “it was hell” because “social services didn’t believe my case and thought I was lying”. At one meeting she described how a social worker told her, “I don’t believe people’s stories anymore” and “threatened to remove me”.

“The policy causes massive hardship. They can’t afford rent so they end up having sex with dodgy blokes to have a roof over their head. Some women slept on buses, others in A&E, sometimes there would be a spare cell.”

“It’s a horrendous, hidden world.” Adaoma has suffered under Britain’s racist immigration system for decades. Even after people come to Britain, they face crippling fees to renew their visas.

The food bank meant that “at least

there was milk and bread”. But it affected what else the family could eat.

“I couldn’t work and sometimes friends would drop by with £10 or £20,” she added. “I normally prepare food from scratch, but we had no choice.”

Theresa May, as Tory home secretary, pushed more migrants onto short-term visas as part of the “hostile environment”. This means more people are banned from claiming any benefits.

The coronavirus crisis has made the situation worse as more migrants are laid off. And over 100,000 people banned from benefits could soon be sacked, according to the Migration Observatory and the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Risky

Solicitor Wendy Pettifer worked at the Hackney Community Law Centre, supporting people who had no recourse to public funds, for many years. She said the policy creates a “complete and absolute breach of the human rights of women and children” and forces women “into very risky and dangerous situations”.

“All my clients were women,” Wendy told Socialist Worker, “single parents, many working in the care sector or elsewhere in the public sector.”

“The policy causes massive hardship. They can’t afford rent so they end up having sex with dodgy blokes to have a roof over their head. Some women slept on buses, others in A&E, sometimes there would be a spare cell.”

“It’s a horrendous, hidden world.” Adaoma has suffered under Britain’s racist immigration system for decades. Even after people come to Britain, they face crippling fees to renew their visas.

The Home Office suffered a blow in a test case at the High Court at the beginning of May. An eight year old boy As Adaoma explained, “The Home

IN BRIEF

What is ‘No recourse to public funds’?

- Around one million migrants are barred from accessing benefits under the “no recourse to public funds” (NRPF) measure
- NRPF is a condition attached to those with temporary immigration status
- People from outside the European Union have to wait up to ten years until they can apply for “indefinite leave to remain”. Many are subject to NRPF.
- NRPF was part of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, pushed through by Tony Blair’s Labour government.
- People with NRPF can’t claim any benefits and can’t be allocated social housing
- Theresa May expanded this in 2012. She decided that anyone granted “limited leave to remain” on family or private life grounds should be subject to NRPF

Architects—Tony Blair and Theresa May

Office was saying we had to pay almost £6,000 to extend our visas to stay in the country. When we wrote to them and said we couldn’t afford it, they said it’s free now.

This fits with the Tories’ talk of only wanting “skilled” migrants to come to Britain. But policies such as NRPF show that racist scapegoating of all migrants underlines immigration rules.

Adaoma said it was insulting to say that people are trying to “rip off the system”.

“Who wants their kids to see them crying because they have no support and can’t work?” she asked. “People are having breakdowns. It’s mind blowing how they treat people.”

known as “W”, with the support of his migrant mother, won a ruling saying the NRPF policy was unlawful and breached human rights.

The court had heard how W and his mother had been street homeless. She was on a ten-year route to settlement in Britain. This involves four visas, each two and a half years long, while the NRPF condition applies throughout.

But it’s unclear what impact the ruling will have, and the Home Office can still impose the NRPF condition.

Disappointing

Wendy said it was disappointing that despite the court ruling “they weren’t going to hand down a full order”.

Instead the government has time to respond. “Then we’ll have another hearing,” explained Wendy. “They’ll respond in a year and then the steam will go out of it.”

The policy is part of a Tory attempt to push the racist myth that migrants are a “drain on resources”.

Johnson last week was forced to say, “Clearly people who have worked hard for this country, who live and work here should have support of one kind or another.”

“It means you only survive to the next day. I have applied for benefits, but I don’t know if I will get anything.”

“It’s not just migrants from outside of the European Union (EU), subject to NRPF, who are prevented from accessing welfare support. EU migrants have to prove that they are “exercising their treaty rights” to work in other countries.”

This requires proof that they have been working. And they can only keep their jobseeker status for

‘One small trip and you’re down’

IN SCENES reminiscent of an aid distribution at a refugee camp in Calais, desperate people queue to pick up food. Volunteers give out bags of supplies and get tents for people to sleep in.

For many cash-in-hand workers, even showing they have worked is near impossible.

Martin, another Polish building worker, worked in Manchester and London until he was sacked following a work injury last November. He lives in a hotel in North Acton, west London, and travels two and a half hours every Thursday to pick up food.

“For Universal Credit I needed three weeks’ pay slips,” he said. “I had pay slips from Manchester, but in London I was paid straight into the hand.”

Piotr, a Polish migrant who worked as a building labourer, queues up every Thursday. “I only eat two times a day with help from charity organisations,” he told Socialist Worker. “I come from Liverpool Street on the bus because it’s free now.”

“It means you only survive to the next day. I have applied for benefits, but I don’t know if I will get anything.”

“It’s not just migrants from outside of the European Union (EU), subject to NRPF, who are prevented from accessing welfare support. EU migrants have to prove that they are “exercising their treaty rights” to work in other countries.”

Migrants get food and tents from volunteers in north London to help them survive



Urban House in Wakefield A FILTHY SCANDAL

REFUGEES INSIDE Urban House in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, have “fear and anxiety” of catching coronavirus.

More than 250 refugees have been classified as a “single household” at the Initial Accommodation Centre (IAC). Asylum seekers are placed there before being put into housing. Photographs sent to Socialist Worker show bites from bed bugs on people’s faces and bodies, crowded bedrooms and communal areas, and unsanitary lavatories.

Reza, an Iranian refugee, said social distancing is impossible. “When I came to Urban House, the lockdown had started,” he told Socialist Worker. “Always I have fear and stress about getting coronavirus. There are very narrow corridors and we’re always touching the doors and passing each other.”

Urban House is part of the Mears Group’s outsourcing empire. The Accommodation and Asylum Support Contract for Yorkshire, Humber and the North East is worth more than £1.15 billion over ten years from August 2019.

Mears has subcontracted the facility to Urban Housing Services LLP part of the Citrus Group that owns and manages it.

Pictures

At the Home Affairs Select Committee on 7 May Mears CEO John Taylor tried to rebuff evidence that refugees were at risk. “We had a visit to the building from the director of public health at Wakefield Council and the Home Office on 7 April,” he said.

“I am not sure when those pictures were taken, but certainly we have been exercising social distancing from the outset of the restrictions.”

More recent pictures from the Urban House canteen contradict Taylor’s claim.

Taylor said that a visit on 7 April by the director of public health was “able to confirm that the social distancing, the mealtime arrangements, the washing arrangements and the household arrangements were in keeping with the guidance”.

But Reza explained that the inability to social distance is part of wider problems. “I have changed rooms three times because of bed bugs and most people’s hands and bodies have some bites,” he said.

“Most people have the problem and it’s always itching their bodies.”

Reza added that there’s “no cleaning stuff in the toilets”. “They’ve got one material which is called shampoo, shower gel and soap and most of the time there isn’t enough,” he said.

“It’s liquid, it feels watered down, and I have to go to the next shower to get any.”



REFUGEES AT Urban House are covered in bites from insanitary conditions (top) Most sleep in rooms with many others (middle) toilets regularly lack toilet roll and soap (above)

Another photograph from 29 April shows an Afghan refugee, blood on his arm from self-harm, sleeping in a reception area of the building.

The South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group (SYMAAG) said he had “gathered all his belongings and pillows and went to the reception area to demand to be moved to housing”.

“The security staff made him sleep outside between the two double doors at the entrance for the rest of the night,” it said.

Reza knew someone who lived in the room with the Afghan refugee. “He was harming himself,” said Reza. “He was cutting his hands with a knife and shaving blade, and the floor was always covered in blood.”

“That’s why he couldn’t stay in the room.”

Reza said that making the man sleep between the two doors is “the kind of behaviour that’s happening to us and getting very normal”.

“Issues like this are happening every day,” he said.

“It’s racism.”

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown.

Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



Lenin at 150—why his ideas still matter

CHESTERFIELD

Thu 11 June, 6.30pm
829-532-8731

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Thu 11 June, 6.30pm
874-012-7970

NOTTINGHAM & DERBY

Wed 10 June, 7pm
354-874-4790

LIVERPOOL

Wed 10 June, 7pm
493-925-5919

NEWCASTLE

Wed 10 June, 7pm
368-595-7212

OXFORD

Thu 11 June, 6.30pm
819-8375-8981



The Socialist Workers Party is holding online meetings during the coronavirus crisis. This is to ensure that there can still be collective local discussion, organising and actions.

Most of the meetings will be held using the Zoom system. Download the Zoom app onto your phone or computer and at the time given for your local meeting ask to "Join a meeting".

You can then enter the number printed on this page for the appropriate meeting. **The password for all meetings is 967537.**

Make sure you look at the SWP Facebook page facebook.com/SocialistWorkersParty for news of national online meetings and other updates.

**{ SOCIALIST WORKER }
ONLINE MEETINGS**

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

BIRMINGHAM

Is science neutral?

Wed 10 June, 7pm

291-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY

Coronavirus, capitalism and mental health

Wed 10 June, 8pm

352-8912411

BOLTON & WIGAN

Police, racism and the state

Fri 12 June, 7pm

604-325-1447

BRADFORD

Socialism in a time of pandemics

Thu 11 June, 7pm

857-8372-8396

BRISTOL

From anger to revolution—what makes peoples rise up?

Wed 10 June, 7pm

688-397-3148

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

The legacy of Empire

Wed 10 June, 7.30pm

446-409-5118

CAMBRIDGE

Police, surveillance and the state

Thu 11 June, 5pm

681-800-4408

CARDIFF

Can workers run society?

Wed 10 June, 7pm

630-181-4857

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN AND PERTH

Transgender resistance—socialists and the fight for trans liberation

Wed 10 June,

8pm

396-573-1805

EDINBURGH

Coronavirus, the family and women's oppression

Wed 10 June, 7.30pm

737-521-8605

GLASGOW

A rebel's guide to Mary Wollstonecraft

Thu 11 June, 7pm

889-4663-4626

HARLOW

Capitalism, diet and the politics of food

Thu 11 June, 7.30pm

633-929-2968

HUDDERSFIELD

Is another education possible?

Thurs 11 June,

6pm

234 919 9440

KENT

Is another education possible?

Thu 10 June, 8.15pm

434-623-8064

LANCASTER AND MORECAMBE

Coronavirus and the Global South

Thu 11 June, 7pm

992-204-9372

LEEDS

The state and coronavirus

Thu 11 June, 6.30pm

856-912-7408

LONDON: HACKNEY

Fascism, the far right and pandemics

Thu 11 June,

7.30pm

798-534-2585

LONDON: HARINGEY

Is science neutral?

Wed 10 June,

7.30pm

459-388-1576

LONDON: NEWHAM

Is another education possible?

Wed 10 June,

7pm

811-4659-1877

LONDON: SOUTH

From Minneapolis to Brixton—police brutality and protest

Wed 10 June,

7pm

497-196-1801

LONDON: SOUTH EAST

Racism, the Global south and the scapegoating of migrants

Wed 10 June,

7.30pm

530-913-6390

LONDON: TOWER

Trump vs China—coronavirus and imperialism

Wed 10 June, 7.30pm

818-391-0420

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

Fighting Macron's Thatcherite project in France today

Wed 10 June,

7.30pm

543-030-057

LONDON: WEST AND NW

Bolsonaro, the state and the Covid 19 crisis—hearing from an activist in Brazil

Thu 11 June, 6pm

731-479-3555

MANCHESTER

What's the alternative to capitalist education?

Wed 10 June, 7pm

870 7268 5222

NORWICH

Coronavirus, Trump and the US

Wed 11 June, 7.30pm

906-652-5299

PORTSMOUTH

Is science neutral?

Wed 10 June, 7.30pm

488-934-2909

SHEFFIELD & SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Eugenics, Covid-19 and capitalist crisis

Thu 11 June, 7pm

529-174-9278

SOUTHAMPTON

Coronavirus and imperialism

Wed 10 June, 7.30pm

381-513-5080

SWANSEA

Legacy of the slave trade—why US cops murder black people

Thu 11 June, 7.30pm

248-448-3170

A powerful and necessary film about abortion access

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always is about a teenager struggling to get support as she seeks an abortion. It's an important watch, writes **Helen O'Sullivan**

NEVER, RARELY, Sometimes, Always is a film that centres on a 17 year old girl Autumn, whose home, social and school life all appear as dysfunctional as each other.

It tells the story of Autumn's journey and the obstacles she experiences when she finds herself pregnant and wants to have an abortion.

Autumn lives in Pennsylvania and is encouraged to not have an abortion by her doctor, who actively misinforms her of what abortion is and involves.

The film takes us on a dark journey with Autumn. It shows the lengths Autumn has to go to in order to end her pregnancy, and the lack of advice and support to help her access services.

Autumn turns to her cousin Skylar and they resort to travelling to New York. Along the way their encounters expose the hostile world that women experience daily.

These include sexual advances to the inaccessibility of abortion services if you are working class—particularly young and working class.

Barriers

The scenes of Autumn accessing the clinics and the actual abortion show how the barriers are physical as well as practical and structural.

As an activist involved in the Abortion Rights campaign they invoked strong feelings in me. The film doesn't shy away from showing what women accessing these services experience.

A lot of films about abortion often show the distress the woman has in making the decision.

Often they end with them not



SIDNEY FLANIGAN as Autumn

actually going through with it. The distress is always about the woman's own actions. Not the structural and societal barriers they face in accessing services and the impact that plays on their decision making.

Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Always does the exact opposite of this. It shows a brutal but unfortunately very realistic experience that many girls and women have. This film has

come out at a time when women's reproductive rights in the US are being attacked by Donald Trump, with access to abortion increasingly becoming more difficult.

These rights have been attacked more during lockdown. Authorities in Texas and Ohio were able to suspend all abortions in March by classifying them as elective procedures.

Films like this are greatly needed

to give an honest and open account of women's experiences, with the oppression they face within society and structurally.

It is an important watch. It makes sure that the only story being told isn't that of the anti-abortionist.

Never, Rarely, Sometimes Always is available to stream on various services including YouTube, Google Play and Amazon Prime

History show that's full of facts but not much else

TELEVISION

HISTORY 101

Available now on Netflix

TWENTY minutes isn't very long for a history programme. So the premise of Netflix's History 101—a series of bitesize history documentaries—seems ambitious.

The somewhat eclectic list of episodes—which include feminism, oil in the Middle East and nuclear power—seem almost guaranteed to be interesting. Instead all

we get is little more than timelines and infographics without any explanation, narrative or argument to say what any of it means.

Take the first episode for example—fast food.

The entire first half is spent telling us that fast food businesses began in the US then spread to other countries.

But it doesn't tell us why or even how.

Then about 12 minutes in we get to what is presumably meant to be the weighty stuff.

Fast food, it turns out, is unhealthy and bad for



Stats—but what do they mean?

the environment. So now McDonald's markets salad and vegan options too.

What are we to make of this? "What happens next is in our hands." And that's it.

Every episode follows the same, empty format.

The problem isn't that the show tries to say too much. It's that it's almost at pains to avoid saying anything at all.

It is possible to say at least something in the space of 20 minutes. History 101 doesn't even try.

It all has the feel of a

show that wants to take up hot topic "issues" but without the conviction or interest to actually do it.

Instead it just pads out each episode with facts and waffle until it's finally time to sign off with a vague, half-hearted conclusion.

If anything, this makes them feel as if they go on far too long.

Twenty minutes shouldn't be very long for a history programme.

But it's a long time to talk when you've got nothing to say.

Nick Clark

THEATRE

WeNotVirus

Online performances via Zoom. Book spaces at omnibus-clapham.org

A COLLECTIVE of actors, writers, directors and creatives of East and South East Asian heritage will join forces online to present a new digital arts event titled WeNotVirus.

It's described as an "urgent artistic response" that aims to shine a light on the surge in hate crime directed towards East and South East Asian people during the Covid-19 crisis.

Daniel York Loh, one of the project's producers, said, "It's about making a statement.

"You can't let this kind of thing happen and there be a gaping silence.

"Representation is so important because if you're not visible in the media or culture the easier it is to dehumanise you."

WeNotVirus features ten newly commissioned stories delivered using a variety of art forms including film, poetry, dance and song. The



Poster for WeNotVirus

themes explore race, identity, representation, perspective and economics through the lens of artists and their communities.

A panel discussion with leading academics and activists will round off the performances each day and audiences will be invited to participate.

The festival's producer Jennifer Lim said, "During a time when there has been a growing rise in hate crime against diasporic East and South-East Asian people it is vital that we are given a platform to amplify our voice.

"Thanks to the Arts Council, who have recognised the pressing need to respond strongly and creatively, WeNotVirus aims to kickstart a movement which helps to break down the mystery and fear by putting our stories out there and making our voices heard."

AS America burned with rage at the murder of George Floyd, media commentators begged protesters to get off the streets and instead use "democratic" methods to vent their anger.

But Cornell West, one of black America's most foremost public intellectuals, took to CNN to denounce those methods as a fraud.

"The system cannot reform itself. We've tried black faces in high places," he insisted.

The alternative, he said, was "revolution" and "by revolution what I mean is the democratic sharing of power, resources, wealth and respect".

West's call would have found a ready echo in the late 1960s as black ghettos across America exploded every summer.

Police racism, black unemployment and poverty, and slum housing brought people on the streets.

Back then, the establishment was almost exclusively white. So ideas of overthrowing the system mixed easily with those of electing black people to replace the whites that sat at the top.

Even the most radical groups, such as the Black Panther Party, combined their commitment to revolution with the ideas of reforming the system.

They put together a host of social programmes and fought election campaigns while at the same time patrolling racist police with their guns clearly visible.

Repression

The strategy of electing black people to high office began as a supplement to the struggle. But as the combative 1960s gave way to recession and repression in the 1970s, it became ever more important.

In March 1969 there were 994 black men and 131 black women who held office around the country. By May 1975 this figure had more than tripled to 2,969 men and 530 women.

And, as the number of black people in high office rocketed, so the movement on the streets grew smaller.

Now, if you wanted something done, instead of relying on the power of your protests and organisation you could go to a black mayor, a senator, or congressman.

Another effect of the strategy was the enlargement of the black middle class.

Not only were there black people in high office, but their children could now attend the elite institutions once closed to them.

They could sit on the boards of global corporations, and live in houses in areas once reserved for wealthy whites alone.

The strategy reached its peak



BLACK PANTHER Party artist Emory Douglas put his work at the disposal of the revolution, not the black middle class

RACISM AND REVOLUTION IN THE US

Attempts to reform racism out of American society, including the 'black faces in high places' strategy, have failed. Yuri Prasad says we need a more radical approach



with the election of Barack Obama in 2008.

It's difficult to overestimate the effect of Obama becoming the first black president in a land that a little over a hundred fifty years before might have had him chained as a slave.

Expectations were sky high, and driven by Obama's open-ended slogans, "Hope" and "Change".

Mainstream commentators now talked about the US being a "post-racial" society. But it

There was talk of a 'post-racial' society, but cracks soon appeared

wasn't long before cracks began to appear.

Many poorer black people in particular now asked, how is that we have a black president, a black attorney general, and black police commissioners but we can't get cops charged with murder when they kill unarmed black people?

Why is it that black American's are imprisoned at six times the rate of whites? Why are white men with criminal records as likely to be hired

as black men with no criminal record? How come the wealth gap between black and white people continues to grow?

And, why has the gap between poor blacks and rich blacks been growing even faster?

Questions such as these cut deep into the idea that electing black officials was the answer for the most oppressed.

If Obama, with all his sophistication, cleverness and charm couldn't change the racist nature of the United States wasn't this proof that something more systemic was to blame for racism, rather than the skin complexion of the person supposedly in charge?

That point would have been well understood by the black radical Malcolm X, who in 1964 pointed out that, "You can't have capitalism without racism."

And Martin Luther King had argued in 1967, "We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others."

Both came to understand that racism is endemic to capitalism, not an aberration that can be removed by reforms and better education.

That's because capitalism depends upon divide and rule for its survival.

Machine

Those now fighting on the streets of Minneapolis and beyond face the armed might of the state—a machine whose main purpose it is to defend the system.

The militarised police, with their pepper sprays, automatic weapons and tanks can appear to us as too strong to be defeated.

But revolution has its own arsenal.

In offices, factories, schools, hospitals and transit systems work millions of people without whom the system cannot function.

The task now is to spread the anger and spirit of resistance that exists on the streets into the workplaces.

Those whose lives are being decimated by the economic violence of our rulers must hear the argument that the same system that is ready to sacrifice their lives for the god of profit, is the same system that uses vicious racism to keep us divided and downtrodden.

The age old prejudices that allow some workers to feel superior because their skin colour can be broken.

As 40 million Americans join the dole queue, never has that spurious claim been so easily proved to be worthless.

A revolution is no easy task, but the ranks of those who want to fight for it have been swelled by a wave of revulsion at the racist police murders—and the vicious system of exploitation the cops defend.



Tenant farmers join a Communist-inspired union drive in Arkansas in 1937

How Communists took on 'Jim Crow' segregation

COMMUNIST Party activists in the US waged a war against racial segregation during the 1930s Great Depression.

In the teeth of brutal opposition they helped build a multi-racial workers' movement.

Nowhere was the battle fiercer than in the Deep South—where most black people lived at the time. Communists knew they would have to recruit there.

Those who joined the fledgling party were impressed. Black Communist Angelo Herndon wrote, "We were called comrades without condescension or patronage. Better yet, we were treated like equals and brothers."

The party's first major test came in 1929 in Gastonia, North Carolina, when the Communist-run National Textile Workers Union called a strike.

The town was famed for its mills and terrible working conditions.

Communists organised integrated meetings with black strikers speaking—at a time when mainstream unions barely allowed black workers to join.

Company police broke picket lines and meetings with clubs, while organisers

were targeted with guns. Striking Communist Ella Mae Wiggins was killed when a group of men jumped out of a car and began shooting.

Wiggins was white but chose to live in a black area.

Although the strike was eventually defeated, the knowledge that black and white workers could strike together spread like wildfire.

The lesson that white workers could be broken from racism—providing no concessions were made to it—was repeated at meetings across the US.

Native
Soon the Northern-based black Communists were supplemented by dozens of native Southerners, black and white.

They were well-schooled in how to answer what were then difficult questions.

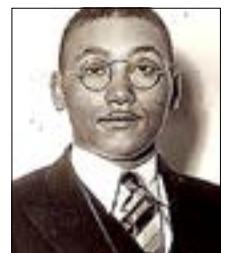
William Dunne recalls that the first question many would ask a white Communist was, "Would you want your daughter to marry a nigger?"

Dunne would reply, "That will be her affair, not mine. But one thing you can rest assured of—I would rather that she jump into a lake than to marry such a yellow-bellied Negro-hater like you."

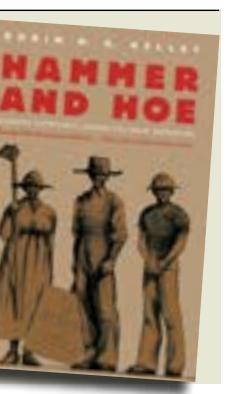
Local interest group The Faversham Society warned, "These batteries, which are untested at this scale, are prone to runaway fires leading to massive explosions and the emission of toxic hydrogen fluoride gas that can kill or maim over a large area."

It said HGV vehicles and construction will increase carbon emissions in the local area.

And the construction site is "well below sea level"—meaning developers will have to raise a sea wall



Brave Communists from the Deep South Angelo Herndon (top) and Ella Mae Wiggins (above)

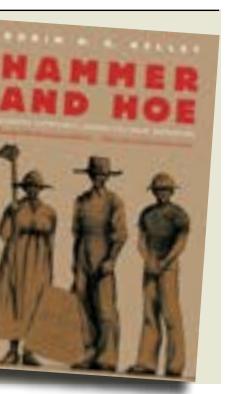


READ MORE

- Say It Loud! Marxism and the fight against racism Edited by Brian Richardson £9.99

- Hammer and Hoe—Alabama Communists During the Great Depression By Robin Kelly £17.99

- Defying Dixie By Genda Gilmore £13.99



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COMMENT

Renewables are a must but can't be run for profits



RENEWABLES SUCH AS solar power are essential

in the coming years.

The United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said that coal power needs to be cut to 58-79 percent of 2010 levels by 2030.

But the chaotic nature of capitalism means that the construction of solar parks or wind farms don't happen in a rational way.

Developers bulldoze through local wildlife—not because they want to fight the climate crisis, but because they want to make profit.

When firms tried to start fracking across Lancashire, Surrey and Sussex they tried to pose as environmentally friendly.

In reality they were just worried about their bottom line—and the Tories backed them up.

To get round local objections to fracking, Whitehall increased its powers to overturn council decisions to reject planning applications for fracking drills.

The Tories have employed the same tactic for Cleve Hill.

They have declared it a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

The oil and gas companies were worried about their bottom line

This means that the government got the final say on its development. Private energy firms can't be relied upon to provide the kind of mass energy transition needed to tackle the urgent climate crisis.

Yet this is the strategy being employed by the Tory government.

Auctions
The government announced in March that it would hold a round of "clean energy auctions" in 2021 for solar and onshore wind developments.

These auctions will mean private firms bid for Contracts for Difference.

This is a scheme where the government guarantees the amount that firms will be paid for energy.

It means companies can take on highly lucrative contracts with a reduced risk of going bust.

We urgently need more renewable energies worldwide to cut carbon emissions.

But we need them to be safe for people and to be developed in the most sustainable ways possible.

It shouldn't be left to big business or the Tories to decide how much and what type of renewable energies are used, or where sites are developed.

Ordinary people should have a say in any transition to cleaner energy.

And the fight for renewable energy can also be used as an opportunity to demand democratically run public services and well paid, unionised jobs.

The Spectator—a sordid establishment journal

by SIMON BASKETTER

THE SPECTATOR magazine claims it invented the usage of “the establishment” in 1955 to mean the networks of power that run society

That claim is as true as Mary Wakefield’s account of her family suffering coronavirus that it printed along with her husband Dominic Cummings’ view in March.

The usage of the term is at least 100 years older, but nonetheless The Spectator is the magazine of the establishment.

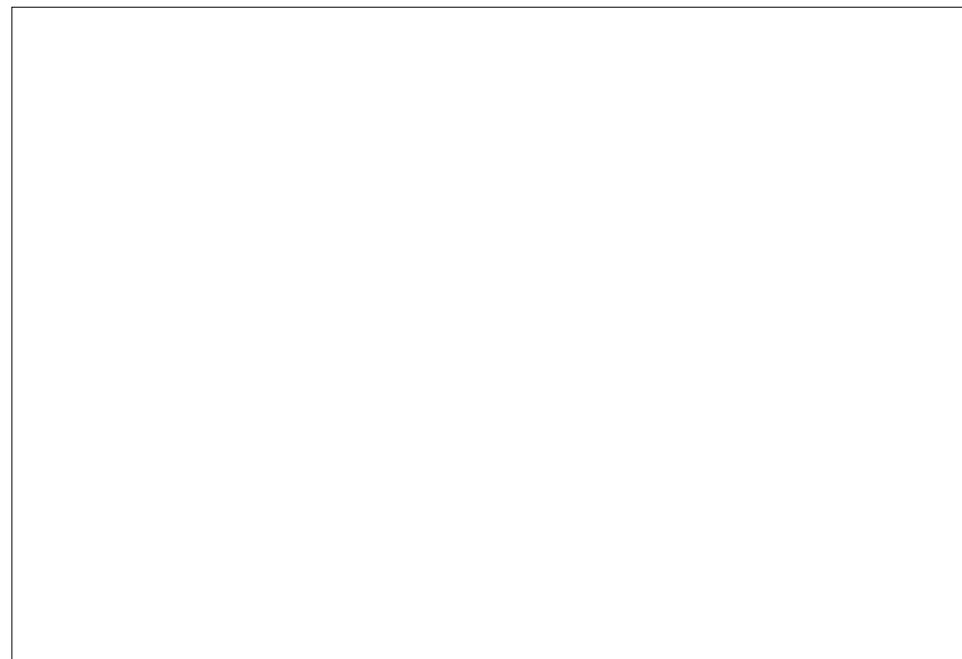
Wakefield had been at The Spectator for two decades after she won a travel writing prize.

The prize was judged by the then-editor of the magazine, Boris Johnson.

The Johnson editorship ran from 1999 to 2005. He set about making the magazine a byword for Westminster intrigue known as the “Sextator”.

The scandals, while tedious and often cringeworthy, did show how close the networks of power were.

And they cost both



BORIS JOHNSON, editor of the “Sextator” from 1999 to 2005

Johnson and Labour’s David Blunkett—among others—cabinet positions.

It continues today.

So chancellor Rishi Sunak was best man at the wedding of the magazine’s political editor James Forsyth to ITV News’ national editor

Allegra Stratton. Sunak and Forsyth are friends and “Old Wykehamists”, graduating from Winchester College public school.

Stratton has announced she’s leaving ITV News for a job at the Treasury.

The history of the magazine

is of cabinet ministers and Lords—either on their way up or down.

The Spectator does a good job of maintaining its access to the hallways of respectability.

Its influential chairman is Andrew Neil whose career,

beyond promoting his own ego, has been as an ideological bag carrier of ruling class ideas in the media.

He served Rupert Murdoch and the squabbling Barclay brothers who own the magazine from tax havens.

The Spectator has a long history of publishing writers who revel in inflaming hatred.

Rod Liddle rarely goes a month without accusations of attacking ethnic minorities or those advocating women’s rights.

His columns are essentially ghost written with longer words than his ghost written bille in the newspapers.

Bigotry

Taki Theodoracopulos is a columnist with a decades-long history of plastering bigotry across the Spectator’s pages.

He has suggested that black people have lower IQs and wrote a column originally headlined, “In praise of the Wehrmacht.”

Defences of the bigotry the magazine carries argue that—insert bigot’s name here—is simply one voice

among the pages of The Spectator.

To deny them the magazine as a platform would thus infringe their freedom of expression.

It runs less offensive pieces by moderates, such as Nick Cohen, for balance.

There are many odious writers in the Spectator. But it is not simply clickbait.

The Spectator has a long history of printing bigotry that reveals what passes for thought in ruling class circles.

When it denounced Hollywood as run by Jews in the 1990s, it was reflecting the common sense of its writers and its readers.

When Liddle tried to get the trial of black teenager Stephen Lawrence’s murderers stopped by being in contempt of court, it wasn’t a childish accident. It was deliberate.

The magazine is that of the establishment and its overpriced pages often do give an insight into the minds of the rich.

And like what takes place on the office sofa, it is not a pretty sight.

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Plan for new repressive laws reignites rage in Hong Kong

For the second time this year, pro-democracy protesters have filled the streets of Hong Kong. **Sadie Robinson** looks at what's driving their anger

 **ANGRY** protests have erupted in Hong Kong against a new clampdown on freedom of speech and protest.

Cops have arrested hundreds and attacked demonstrators with water cannon, tear gas and pepper-spray bullets. Some of those detained were school children.

Demonstrators are fighting two things. The first is a plan by China to impose new national security laws on Hong Kong. The second is an attempt by Hong Kong leaders to make ridiculing China's national anthem a criminal offence (see right).

Opponents say the laws would radically undermine people's rights.

Lawyer Antony Dapiran described China's security laws as "the nuclear option—Beijing's ultimate power to impose whatever it wants on Hong Kong".

Another protester said, "When they say you're guilty then you're guilty. Of course we need to fight."

China's top legislature, the National People's Congress, agreed a draft of the national security legislation last Thursday. It could now be finalised and passed later in the summer.

This would mark the first time that a Chinese law carrying criminal penalties is introduced into Hong Kong's legal code. It would bypass the local legislature in the territory and any public consultation processes.

The new legislation would prohibit "splittism, subversion, terrorism, any behaviour that gravely threatens national security and foreign interference".

These terms are all up for interpretation by the Chinese state. And it's unclear how China would enforce the



PEOPLE MARCH to demand democratic rights in May

PICTURE: STUDIO INCENDO

law. For instance, Hong Kong has a separate judiciary. But the draft law instructs this judiciary to "effectively prevent, stop and punish acts endangering national security".

The bill would also allow China's secret police to be formally present in Hong Kong.

Opponents say all of this violates Hong Kong's Basic Law (see right).

Hong Kong's leader Carrie Lam has backed the legislation, claiming any fears that people's rights would be limited were "imagination". She said Hong Kong was a "very free

society". Yet she also said that people have freedom of speech "for the time being". And she added, "Freedoms are not absolute."

Lam said the laws target an "extremely small group"—referring to mass pro-democracy protests that erupted in Hong Kong last June.

Yet the protests involved at least a quarter of the population.

And an opinion poll by the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute in March found that nearly two thirds of respondents backed them.

The authorities in China and Hong Kong claim their new laws will create a more "stable business environment for foreign investors".

So far they have sparked angry protests.

Protest movements in Hong Kong have repeatedly beaten back powerful states. New movements have emerged despite repression.

The current actions are a continuation of the movement for change that began in Hong Kong one year ago and forced the state to retreat. They can win too.

US and British rulers are no friends of the movement

 **SOME OF** the most right wing rulers across the globe have claimed to stand with protesters in Hong Kong.

US president Donald Trump's press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump was "displeased" at China's attempt to impose its security law.

A large part of the displeasure is about money.

The growth of China means the US can no longer dominate the world through economic power alone. Trump has spent the past couple of years

launching trade wars against China as a result.

Hong Kong matters because it provides a bridge between China's economy and the West. The Economist magazine has described it as a "gateway to the Chinese market" for many firms.

If Hong Kong comes to be seen simply as another part of China, tensions between global ruling classes and bosses will intensify.

As McEnany complained, it is "hard to see how Hong Kong can remain a financial

hub if China takes over". Over 1,300 US firms have offices in Hong Kong, employing around 100,000 workers. But the US isn't alone in wanting to limit China's power to help out other rich people.

The last British governor of Hong Kong and former Tory party chair Lord Chris Patten has said Britain's government must "stand up to" China.

"The Hong Kong people have been betrayed by China," he said. "What we are seeing is a new Chinese dictatorship." Britain ran Hong Kong

until it handed it back to China in 1997. It had grabbed the territory at the end of the first Opium War in 1839. Under British rule there was no democracy, and most public protest was illegal.

We should take no lessons in how to defend rights and freedoms from any of our rulers.



Anger over anthem insult

 HONG Kong's leaders want to make it illegal to insult China's national anthem, March of the Volunteers.

If their bill is passed, anyone showing "intent to insult" when singing the anthem could be fined or thrown in jail for three years. The bill hasn't defined what "insulting" is.

The vote on the law is set for 4 June—the anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.



Strong history of protests

 HONG Kong has a mini-constitution called the Basic Law.

Under this, it is required to implement a new national security law to replace British colonial legislation that was revoked in 1997.

In 2003, Hong Kong's first chief executive or leader, Tung Chee-hwa, tried to pass authoritarian legislation. Mass protests forced him to withdraw.



Win over the extradition law

 A HUGE pro-democracy movement erupted last June in response to a proposed "extradition law". The law would have made it easier for China to target political opponents by allowing "suspects" to be extradited to China.

A mass movement forced Hong Kong's rulers to withdraw the bill.

It saw at least a quarter of the population join militant protests and several partial general strikes.

Use boost in union membership to take on Tories and bosses

By CHARLIE KIMBER

THERE'S GOOD news—the number of British workers in trade union members rose last year by 91,000 to 6.44 million.

Trade union membership levels have now risen for three consecutive years.

According to figures from the Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy, union membership increased in both the public and private sector by 74,000 and 17,000 respectively.

And the proportion of all workers who are union members increased to 23.5 percent.

The latest increase was driven by a big rise in union membership among women workers.

The increase of 170,000 means there are 3.69 million women in unions—27 percent of women workers. There are now more women in a union than at any time since these figures began to be collected in 1995.

However, the figures also show a trend towards particular sectors of women workers joining unions.

Among women employees, 35.7 percent with a university degree or equivalent, and 37.3 percent with "other higher education" qualifications were union members.

Compares

This compares to 18.6 percent or less for those with lower levels of qualification or no qualifications.

Unions continue to have a problem with recruiting younger people. Less than a quarter of current union members are aged under 34 while more than 40 percent are aged 50 and over.

These figures predate the coronavirus pandemic, but there is evidence that unions are growing this year as workers look to unions to defend them against profit-hungry bosses and uncaring employers.

Unison said it has seen a net increase of 16,000 in the year to date—18 percent higher than the

TUC UNION federation leader Frances O'Grady wants social partnership with ministers and bosses

gain in the same period of 2019. The biggest surge in inquiries came directly after Boris Johnson's address to the nation on 10 May, urging people to return to work.

Signs of workers' organisation are always welcome.

But the point of unions is to fight—and recruits are generally retained only when they see that a

union is prepared to act rather than just offer services.

So gaining extra members has to be combined with more confrontation with the bosses.

The buzz words of "partnership" and "national interest" are always a dead end. But they are particularly useless as lives are at stake during the pandemic and a howling

economic crisis approaches. Here the evidence from the top of the union movement is dire.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady responded to the figures by saying, "The hard work and dedication of millions of workers has brought us through this crisis.

"Ministers must put workers' voices at the heart of their

strategy, including through a national recovery council bringing together unions and employers."

We don't need chummy sit-downs with bosses and Tories.

We need the spirit of the walkouts over coronavirus safety, the climate strikers, the defiance of the government and corporations—and insurgent resistance from below.

Cops arrest climate protesters

AROUND 2,000 climate rebels took to the streets on Saturday to demand "No going back" to

environmental and ecological crisis. Extinction Rebellion members took part in socially-distanced protests at dozens of locations.

They called for a Citizens' Assembly on Covid-19 recovery and the government response to the climate emergency.

In Parliament Square, central London, rebels say about 12 protesters were arrested under coronavirus legislation.

Despite standing several metres apart, the Met police said, "A small number of arrests have been made for breach of Covid-19 regulations."

Protester Sarah said, "The crisis that's happened with Covid-19 has shown us what we can really do to face an emergency, and what our governments can do when they are motivated. We're asking to build on some of the positive

changes which have happened over the last couple of months."

She said these were "the drop in pollution, people cycling and walking more, people getting outside".

It's right to insist that action on the climate emergency can't wait.

And the London arrests show how police will use the new coronavirus laws to clamp down on protests.

OBITUARY

Ron Singer 1948-2020

RON SINGER was born in the NHS in its very first year of existence. He spent the whole of his adult life working in it and fighting for it.

Ron began working in Hackney Hospital, east London, and was active in ASTMS, a union for medical professionals.

This was the start of a long commitment to trade

unionism in the NHS. He was a member of the health workers branch of the International Socialists, forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party.

He then qualified as a GP and practiced in Edmonton, north London, for many years.

He was active in the Medical Practitioners' Union and in the doctors' section of Unite, which he chaired.

Ron moved to Newham, east London, in 2007 and became very active. He and Jan, his wife, established



Ron Singer

Newham Keep Our NHS Public and were its key organisers, pulling together activists from different organisations to oppose privatisation and cuts.

He was patient and diplomatic and won respect and admiration from people of all different opinions.

He was a committed anti-racist fighter, from the Anti Nazi League of the 1970s to Stand Up To Racism now. He went to Calais to volunteer in the refugee camps, raised financial support and offered his house

as a drop off for donations.

Ron hated the system which puts profit before people. But he also had a vision of how things can be different and a picture in his head of a society of equality, social justice and solidarity.

Our borough and our organisation will be much poorer without him.

We send our condolences to his friends, colleagues and family, especially Jan and his step daughter Siobhan, both comrades in our branch.

Newham SWP

RAIL WORKERS

Rail strike call over plan for ‘volunteers’

THE GOVERNMENT has revealed an outrageous plan to use volunteers on the rail network, and unions have responded with a threat of strikes.

The RMT rail union responded with fury after being made aware of government plans to introduce a workforce of unpaid and unskilled “Transport Guardian Angels” on the rail network.

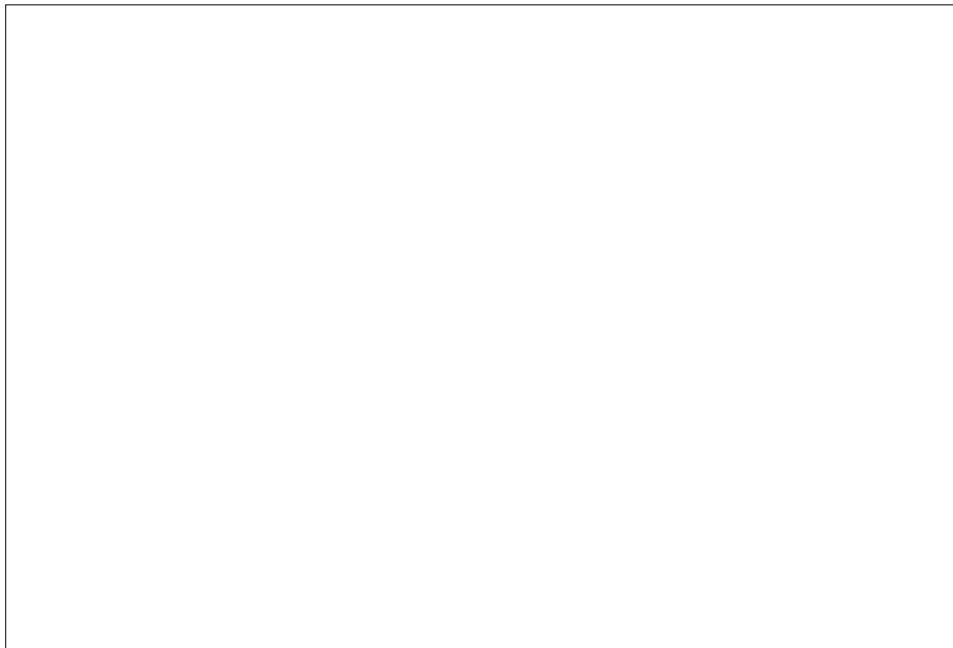
The contract between the Department for Transport and charity “Volunteering Matters” is to recruit an unspecified number of volunteers to perform safety critical roles at railway stations.

Adverts

It had not even been discussed with unions before recruitment adverts were published.

There is no agreement between rail unions and any train operating companies for volunteers to be used in roles such as supporting passenger flow in and out of stations and guiding passengers through new social distancing safe pathways.

In a letter to transport secretary Grant Shapps, the RMT called on the government to immediately

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT** needs trained staff

withdraw from this scheme or face the possibility of industrial action.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said, “RMT is furious that the Department for Transport has done a backroom deal to recruit unpaid and unskilled workers on our railway without even so much as a conversation

with rail unions. These volunteer roles include safety critical functions that only highly skilled and highly trained workers should be undertaking.

“The safety of passengers and workers must come first and make no mistake RMT will vehemently oppose this action.

“RMT regards this as a deliberate provocation and we will fight this with everything at our disposal, including balloting our members for strike action.”

■**THE RMT** is demanding that London Underground cleaners are finally given free travel on the network.

COLLEGES

Blackburn and Coventry face a battle over job cuts

THE UCU union has denounced a plan by bosses at Blackburn College to slash jobs while giving top managers more money.

The plans put 29 workers at risk of losing their jobs, with 11 expected to be made redundant by September.

Meanwhile senior managers would get a salary boost to help them avoid paying tax on pension pots.

The UCU said this would apply only to those with pension savings of £1 million. “The change would see the college pay staff extra in salary instead of contributing to their pension,” it said.

The union said the college’s recent accounts show that six senior managers grabbed an annual salary of over £80,000 last year. The

highest earner was the principal, who got between £175,000 and £180,000.

Meanwhile staff numbers have plummeted by 140 between 2016 and 2019.

■**BOSSES** AT Coventry College are threatening to make redundancies.

Unions say the move has broken a promise bosses made that they would not go ahead with the plans during the coronavirus crisis.

Some 36 jobs are at risk. These include 11 in the apprenticeship team, 12 IT and exam officers and 13 workers in learning services, who look after student wellbeing. Those at risk include student mentors who provide support to vulnerable students.

The UCU has called the attack “outrageous”.

COUNCILS

Derby care homes saved

IN THE face of a union campaign and mounting public pressure, Derbyshire county council last week announced a reversal of plans to close seven care homes in the county.

The plans would have affected over 300 care jobs if they had gone ahead.

Martin Allen, regional secretary for the GMB union’s Midland & East Coast Region, said, “The plan to close these care homes was a bad idea from day one.

“The public knew it, care workers knew it, residents knew it and the GMB union knew it.

“This decision not to close them will come as welcome news at a time when our care workers have been at the front line of tackling this virus.

“We will continue to fight for them every step of the way.”

BT

Fight looms on BT terms

THE CWU union has expressed shock and dismay at BT’s unilateral move to “review” redundancy and paid leaver terms by serving notice on the 2018 Pension Agreement.

That hard-negotiated deal contains a legally binding annex, included at the insistence of the union, that sets out the company’s responsibilities to team member grade employees in any redundancy situation.

BT had admitted that it is this element of the 2018 Pension Agreement alone that it now wants to change.

The motive is to reduce contractual redundancy terms.

Tellingly, the move was announced just as the first compulsory redundancies ever to have been made among team member trades in BT Group are about to come into effect.

HEALTH WORKERS

Hospital workers have been given kit that threatened lives

AMBULANCE staff across Cumbria worked for up to 23 days with face masks that were not “fit tested” to protect them from coronavirus, their Unison union has said.

Union officials now plan to report North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to the Health and Safety Executive.

They said that union members feel angry and let down.

All frontline NHS staff working with potentially infected patients should wear properly tested respirators.

They have to be airtight to prevent the inhalation of potentially infectious airborne moisture particles.

Yet it was not until 15 April—23 days after the government imposed lockdown—that NWAS began fit-testing its masks, said

Unison convenor Mike Oliver.

Almost a year earlier, the union wrote to NWAS bosses to warn of a “significant number of staff” using untested masks.

West Cumbria has already seen a “cluster” of four ambulance staff testing positive for coronavirus.

■**BOSSES** AT The Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle and West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven have been forced to apologise to 130 theatre staff after admitting they had worked with inadequately tested respirators.

The Royal College of Nursing accused the NHS trust involved of “reckless” behaviour. It said the failure over a five-week period may have put workers’ lives at risk.

BME WORKERS



Black workers have been put at risk

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

Scandal of how the NHS treats its black workers

A SHOCKING new report says that black and minority ethnic (BAME) nurses find it harder to get Personal Protective Equipment than their white colleagues.

The figures raise questions about institutional racism in the health service.

The survey by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said the disparity is clearest when nurses were asked about access to fluid-repellent gowns. Some 37 percent of BAME staff reported they didn’t have enough during their shifts, compared to just 19 percent of white British staff.

The report sheds light on why black and Asian health workers have been disproportionately hit by the coronavirus.

Six in ten health workers killed by Covid-19 are BAME.

The Nursing Times

magazine reported recently that BAME nurses and nursing assistants have complained of being taken from their normal wards to

work on Covid-19 wards, and that many suspect that bias and prejudice are involved.

A 2016 workplace study of racism in the NHS found that at 81 percent of trusts a higher proportion of BAME staff said they had personally experienced discrimination from their supervisor.

It also showed that black and Asian nurses were less likely than white colleagues to rise to become senior nurses on higher pay bands and with more responsibility.

The report found that BAME people are concentrated at the bottom rungs of the service, but rare among the “snowy white peaks” of management.

Unions representing health workers must actively take up the cause of BAME members facing direct and indirect discrimination.

And the unions should back workers who come down hard on managers, at all levels, that are using divide and rule tactics to get their way.



TRADE UNIONISTS in Lewisham, south east London, demand no unsafe return to schools

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

KEEP UP FIGHT ON SCHOOLS RETURN

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE TORY plan to get many more children back into schools on 1 June has failed. It's a significant setback for them—but the battle is far from over.

Boris Johnson wanted children in reception, year one and year six across England to return to school from Monday. But many councils and head teachers were pressured to decide it wasn't safe.

Swathes of parents kept their children at home.

Head teachers' union leader Geoff Barton said up to 60 percent of children were absent in some schools.

Most reports suggest around one million of the two million children who could have attended did not go in.

That's a tribute to the campaigning by parents, teachers, and trade unions. It shows we can defy the Tories.

And although small scale,

some workers actively refused to return.

Rob, an NEU union member in Newham, east London, described how workers at a local primary school refused to go to work. "The head teacher had ordered everyone back," he told Socialist Worker.

"People felt very nervous about refusing to go in. But once the decision was taken, it improved people's confidence."

"There's been a sharp increase in union activity and I think that has given members strength to act. It's very inspiring."

Joining

At a primary school in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, teaching assistants refused to return on Monday after joining the NEU the day before.

The Tories also want secondary schools to prepare for some face to face teaching before the summer holidays.



Postal workers in Oxfordshire show solidarity to school workers

At one north London secondary school, staff refused to attend an inset day on Monday.

One NEU member at the school told Socialist Worker, "It would have meant bringing 30 to 40 people together.

"So we said we're not going to go along with that."

The head pushed ahead, so we had a zoom meeting and agreed collectively not

to go in." Across Merseyside councils said there had been no wider reopening of any schools this week.

The mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs, publicly said there should be no wider reopening until 15 June. It followed a 500-strong parents' meeting in the east London borough last week.

And a series of warnings about the risk of reopening

schools led to many head teachers changing their plans last week.

A report from the Independent Sage group of scientists last week said reopening from 1 June risked "a new surge in cases of Covid-19". Four of the government's official Sage scientists also issued warnings about the plan.

NEU activist Jon described how every school across north Somerset subsequently dropped any plans to return on 1 June.

Rob added, "Just before half term, 20 schools were planning to open in Newham on 1 June. As far as I know only one opened for staff training."

The shifts are a testament to the resistance that school workers and parents have mounted. But the battle is only just beginning.

A safe return to school should be decided by scientific advice and the state of

the pandemic, not arbitrary dates. It will still probably be unsafe for schools to reopen wider on 15 June.

Tower Hamlets reception teacher Judy said that at least three workers at her school had already lost someone to Covid-19.

"A lot of children live with grandparents or with people who have health conditions," she said. "There are huge levels of anxiety about schools reopening."

Piers Roberts' five year old stepdaughter Scarlett was hospitalised with an inflammatory disease linked to Covid-19.

He told Socialist Worker, "We know the benefits of school for children's well-being. We want schools to reopen—but when it is safe."

The Tories want more children in schools so they can force more parents back to work. We have to keep up the resistance to stop them gambling with our lives.